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Robbing Peter to Pay Paul

THE Interstate Commerce Commission has granted further priorities in the matter of local coal shipments. This time the Middle West has been favored and some of the very districts which were denouncing the Commission as a meddlesome organization are now praising it for its wisdom. It would appear that a priority order is unfair when it favors the other fellow but is a fine stroke of sagacity when it promises to fill our own coal bins.

The position of the Commission is anything but a pleasant one. It can please only a small section of the country at once, and so it is continually being upbraided by the majority of the public. It never can hope to please everybody and it gets but short thanks from those it does help.

The truth, of course, is that the Commission is doing its best to bear a burden which should never be placed on its shoulders. It should not be called on continually to handle the responsibility for coal delivery. We have the greatest coal mines and claim to have the greatest railroads in the world and yet cannot get coal.

The coal ought to come along in the natural course of events and it is a poor recommendation for the interests involved that they break down in the performance of their duties and have to be given emergency treatments continually by the government.

The presidential candidate who will pledge the best efforts of his party to the task of teaching the coal mines and the railroads to walk without crutches will make a lot of votes.

Food and Famine

THE cost of living strikes hardest when it is felt at the dinner table. A man can make a pair of shoes last just a little longer, a few more cleanings and pressings can always be given to a suit of clothes with good grace with the thought that after all it means more money in the bank. But when the accustomed plenty of the table begins to wane the red glare of rebellion rises in the human mind.

It is of little use to tell a man that the average American eats too much for his own benefit, and that we dig our graves with our teeth. Such reason may be sound, but it does not do away with the desire of the man who is used to having a full table to keep that table well stocked. It will not appease the undernourished thousands of city children.

The population of the United States is expected to be shown as more than 50 per cent urban. Less than one-half are producing food. The less than one-half can produce enough to feed everybody and even export some, but the problem is one of distribution. Here is where the warehouse comes in.

The warehouse owner, the canner, the packer, pays the producer the very lowest he will take for his product. But the producer must sell, for much of his crops are perishable. Once within the doors of the warehouse, where after preservative methods are applied the matter of perishability is negligible, the food supply of the country is at the mercy of the "middleman."

He did not produce it. He does not consume it. But at his price, and his price only, can the people of the country obtain their food. The cost of living thus revolves about those imposing structures of brick and concrete that dot the cities of the United States. Their ownership in private hands puts the life of the country at the mercy of a few.

A comparison of the present prices of meats, canned goods, flour, and all the staples of life with prices of a few years ago shows that the owners of warehouses have had but one object in concentrating the food of the country in warehouses—to make as great a profit as possible. No one expects men in business to make of themselves public benefices, but by the same token the people must eat, and there must be legislation to assure the country that it can get its food without paying usury.

There is one weapon that can be used to advantage by each and every family. It is the family cellar as a storehouse for food. The packing season is just closing and doubtless there was never a season in the history of the country in which more home-storage of preserved goods was accomplished. Jars and cans have been at a premium, in spite of the high figures paid for fruits, vegetables, sugar, vinegar and spices.

Yet there are thousands of homes in which this season of packing away a winter supply of food is not practiced. These families will pay the penalty during the winter in the staggering price to which canned and preserved food has risen. In the big industrial centers where thousands of workers live in rooms and must eat in restaurants, the pinch of the warehouse system will be felt the hardest.

The home cellar can be used as a weapon to fight the cost of food, but how many homes are able to store such necessaries as butter and eggs? How many homes are there in which almost every bit of food comes from the warehouse at the price the warehouse fixes practically without competition?

The government stepped in to guarantee the purity of the food that we eat and nobody doubted its right to do so. Would anyone doubt the authority or the right of the government to prevent starvation? Is the prevention of contamination more important than the prevention of undernourishment? To the farmer the word starvation means little, but to the crowded city it is ever present. And more than half the population of these United States are in the crowded cities.

Indifference

STRENUOUS attempts are being made to bring about a full registration for the presidential election November 2. Appeals especially are being directed to the newly enfranchised, the women, and their failure to respond to such appeals has been pointed to by many as indicative of their indifference to the vote.

There are two reasons chiefly responsible for the failure to turn out for the registration necessary as a preliminary to voting. One is the addiction of the American people to procrastination; the other, the apathy that has blanketed down over the campaigns of Messrs. Cox and Harding.

There can be no argument deduced against woman suffrage as a result of the registration problem. We have watched one candidate go out to the people and give voice to a campaign in which there has not been presented one single constructive idea as to what that candidate would do in the event of his election. On the other hand, we have witnessed the candidate of the other great party sitting out on the front porch waiting for his people to come to him to hear him expound that which all have known. The amusing (yet tragic withal) feature of the last is that the standard bearers have not flocked to the front porch in sufficient numbers, and as a result the candidate has been compelled to go out to the people.

Well, November 2 isn't far away, and then *that* will be over.

On Teaching an Old Dog

THE line that once was popular in describing the only good Indians may well be used for breweries, a dispatch from Washington indicates. We all know that it was the distilleries and breweries themselves which, more than any other one factor, were responsible for the people of the United States deciding that breweries should not brew and distilleries should not distil. The breweries owned saloons and these saloons broke the laws of the cities in which they were located. This lawbreaking was winked at by the breweries under the stress of competition.

Now we learn that the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, W. M. Williams, has discovered that breweries engaged supposedly in manufacturing non-alcoholic cereal beverages actually are used to brew a drink with a kick far stronger than one-half of one per cent. As a result of this discovery Mr. Williams says that he has decided to revoke the licenses of all breweries caught with the goods, and that the manufacturing of all beverages by the lawbreaking establishment will be forbidden.

The liquor interests refused to take good advice before the country went dry. They no doubt are just as thick headed now. It is said though that breweries are converted easily into ice cream factories.

The Shop Foremen

ONE of the difficult factors in all departments of life is the middleman. He has both his accusers and defenders, but seldom does he have a discriminating critic. There are middlemen in business, in education, in government, even in the great sphere of religion. And the universal failure, if it may be pointed out, is that they do not transmit accurately that which they are supposed to carry from one party to another. The middleman, so to speak, is an interpreter of one interest to another, and, of course, the value of any interpretation depends on its accuracy.

Now the shop foreman is the middleman between the management and those who do the work of material production. The shop foreman occupies a most important place in American industry, a place whose importance has never been recognized by those who have the welfare of industry at heart. It has long been a commonplace of poetry and military literature that the sergeant is the most important man in the army. The shop foreman is the sergeant, interpreting the management to the workers, and in turn the workers to the management. Now, it is obvious that if he is a poor interpreter, both parties come to misunderstand each other.

Very frequently the wise plans and good intentions of the management are entirely thwarted by the time they reach the workers through the staff of shop foremen. A manager with the best will in the world will arrange a plan of undoubted benefit to his employes and will be surprised to find that it is not accomplishing what he desired. He usually finds that the plan has been mutilated in its practical application by his subordinates.

Shop foremen are coming to have a new importance in the industrial world. The workingmen judge the whole temper of the firm by the temper of the foremen. Too often, unfortunately, the firm judges the temper of the men by the reports of the foremen. The remedy, of course, is a better understanding all around by the management, foremen and the men.

But the crux of the whole matter probably lies in the foremen's superior intelligent appreciation of his position as that of the interpreter of the good will of both the workingmen and the management.

It would really serve a useful purpose if some foreman of vision and insight should write a tract on the Philosophy of Foremanship.

Making Ethics Reasonable

THERE is a very general belief that American common education is lacking in one important aspect namely the inculcation of a sound moral element. This is not to say, of course, that the trend of education is immoral, nor even unmoral. There is a certain moral element in the very nature of study, in the very act of imparting knowledge. There is a sense of honor which makes itself felt at every examination, and there is also an atmosphere of clean competition in both studies and sports. Moreover, the daily contact of young people with men and women who have devoted themselves to the welfare of the young and who maintain a very high degree of idealism even in these too practical times, is undoubtedly the source of much moral inspiration, if not of definite moral instruction.

It is possible to teach morals in a way to fix in the youthful mind the truth that "being good" is not merely obedience to an arbitrary rule, but is a scientific observance of some of the deepest laws of nature. Every child is told, for example, that "it is wrong to tell a lie." It is right that the child should so be told. But why is a lie wrong?—the child is seldom told that. A lie is morally, socially and economically wrong, it is morally, socially, and economically dangerous and disruptive, and if this idea were firmly planted in the mind, the truth itself would rest on a sounder basis. Speech is the coin of confidence. Men rest on each other's word, just as they take at full face value the coined money which is handed them. When the truthfulness of a man's word becomes vitiated, he is an agent in hindering the exchange of human confidence, and all the operations based on confidence, just as if he were instrumental in diluting the monetary currency and coinage of the country with counterfeit pieces. A lie is a broken bearing in the wheels of social life, not to speak of the disintegrating power which it exerts upon the life in which it originates.

Thus, ethics could be taught with a basis of reason, and as a practical illustration of the actual operations of life. We live in a universe of moral laws which are as unsafely violated as are the natural laws. Indeed morality is a natural law.

The question then comes, after having taught the scientific basis of ethics, how can you supply the motive for men to live up to what they know? Here the spiritual aspect enters. That need not be discussed now. A great step toward the right would be made, however, if only we would explain why the right is right.